

THE METHODS OF THE SSU-MA

1. Benevolence the Foundation

In antiquity, taking benevolence as the foundation and employing righteousness to govern constituted “uprightness.” However, when uprightness failed to attain the desired [moral and political] objectives, [they resorted to] authority [*ch’üan*]. Authority comes from warfare, not from harmony among men. For this reason if one must kill men to give peace to the people, then killing is permissible. If one must attack a state out of love for their people, then attacking it is permissible. If one must stop war with war, although it is war it is permissible. Thus benevolence is loved; righteousness is willingly submitted to; wisdom is relied on; courage is embraced; and credibility is trusted. Within, [the government] gains the love of the people, the means by which it can be preserved. Outside, it acquires awesomeness, the means by which it can wage war.¹

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The Tao of Warfare: Neither contravening the seasons² nor working the people to exhaustion is the means by which to love our people. Neither attacking a state in national mourning nor taking advantage of natural disaster is the means by which to love their people. Not mobilizing the army in either winter or summer is the means by which to love both your own people and the enemy’s people. Thus even though a state may be vast, those who love warfare will inevitably perish. Even though calm may prevail under Heaven, those who forget warfare will certainly be endangered!

When the world had attained peace the Son of Heaven had the “Ta K’ai” [Great Peace] music performed [in celebration]. Then in the spring he held the Sou hunt, and in the fall he held the Hsien hunt. In the spring the feudal lords returned their brigades in good order, while in the fall they trained their soldiers. In this way they did not forget warfare.³

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In antiquity they did not pursue a fleeing enemy more than one hundred paces or follow a retreating enemy more than three days, thereby making clear their observance of the forms of proper conduct [*li*].⁴ They did not ex-

haust the incapable and had sympathy for the wounded and sick, thereby making evident their benevolence. They awaited the completion of the enemy's formation and then drummed the attack, thereby making clear their good faith. They contended for righteousness, not profit, thereby manifesting their righteousness. Moreover, they were able to pardon those who submitted,⁵ thereby making evident their courage. They knew the end, they knew the beginning, thereby making clear their wisdom. These six virtues were taught together at appropriate times, being taken as the Tao of the people's guidelines. This was the rule from antiquity.

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The administrative measures of the Former Kings: They accorded with the Tao of Heaven; they established what was appropriate to Earth. They put the virtuous among the people into office, rectified names, and governed things.⁶ They established the states, defined the hierarchy of feudal positions, and apportioned emoluments according to rank. The feudal lords were pleased and embraced them. Those beyond the seas came to submit. Punishments were eliminated and the army rested. These were the attainments of Sagely Virtue.

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Next came the Worthy Kings: They ordered the rites [*li*], music, laws, and measures and then created the five punishments, raising armored troops to chastise the unrighteous. They made inspection tours [of the feudal lands], investigated [the customs] of the four quarters, assembled the feudal lords, and investigated differences.⁷ If any [of the feudal lords] had disobeyed orders, disordered the constant,⁸ turned his back on Virtue, or contravened the seasons of Heaven⁹—endangering meritorious rulers—they would publicize it among all the feudal lords, making it evident that he had committed an offense. They then announced it to August Heaven and to the sun, moon, planets, and constellations. They prayed to the Gods of Earth, the spirits of the Four Seasons, mountains, and rivers and at the Great Altar [of state]. Then they offered sacrifice to the Former Kings.¹⁰ Only thereafter would the Prime Minister charge the army before the feudal lords, saying, “A certain state has acted contrary to the Tao. You will participate in the rectification campaign on such a year, month, and day. On that date the army will reach the [offending] state and assemble with the Son of Heaven to apply the punishment of rectification.”

The Prime Minister and other high officials would issue the following orders to the army:

When you enter the offender's territory, do not do violence to his gods; do not hunt his wild animals; do not destroy earthworks;¹¹ do not set fire to buildings; do not cut down forests; do not take the six domesticated animals, grains, or implements. When you see their elderly or very young, return them without harming them. Even if you encounter adults, unless they engage you in combat, do not treat them as enemies. If an enemy has been wounded, provide medical attention and return him.

When they had executed the guilty, the king, together with the feudal lords, corrected and rectified [the government and customs] of the state. They raised up the Worthy, established an enlightened ruler, and corrected and restored their feudal position and obligations.

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The Ways by which the kings and hegemonies governed the feudal lords were six:

With territory they gave shape to the feudal lords.¹²

With government directives they pacified the feudal lords.

With the rites and good faith they drew the feudal lords close to them.

With men of wisdom and strength they pleased the feudal lords.

Through strategists they constrained the feudal lords. With weapons and armor they forced the submission of the feudal lords.

By sharing misfortune with them, by sharing benefits¹³ with them, they united the feudal lords. They had the smaller states serve the larger ones in order to bring the feudal lords into harmony.

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They assembled them in order to announce nine prohibitions:

Those who take advantage of weak [states] or encroach on sparsely populated ones will have their borders reduced on all sides.

Those who murder the Worthy or harm the people will be attacked [and deposed].

Those who are brutal within their state and encroach on others outside it will be purged.

Those whose fields turn wild and whose people scatter will be reduced.

Those who rely on the fastness [of natural advantages] to disobey orders will be invaded.

Those who harm or kill their relatives will be rectified.

Those who depose or slay their ruler will be exterminated.

Those who oppose orders and resist the government will be isolated.

Those who are chaotic and rebellious both within and without their borders, who act like animals, will be extinguished.¹⁴

2. Obligations of the Son of Heaven

The duty of the Son of Heaven must be to concentrate on modeling on Heaven and Earth and observing [the measures] of the Former Sages.¹⁵ The duty of officers and common men must be to respectfully serve their parents and to be upright with their ruler and superiors. Even though there is an enlightened ruler, if the officers are not first instructed, they cannot be used.

When the ancients instructed the people they would invariably establish the relationships and fixed distinctions of noble and common—causing them not to encroach on each other; the virtuous and righteous not to exceed each other; the talented and technically skilled not to occlude each other; and the courageous and strong not to clash with each other. Thus their strength was united and their thoughts were in harmony.

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In antiquity the form and spirit governing civilian affairs would not be found in the military realm; those appropriate to the military realm would not be found in the civilian sphere.¹⁶ Thus virtue and righteousness did not transgress inappropriate realms.

Superiors valued officers who were not boastful for officers who do not boast are the greatest talents.¹⁷ If they do not boast they are not self-seeking, and if they are not self-seeking they will not be contentious. When listening to affairs of state¹⁸ superiors want to seek out their true nature, but when listening to affairs within the military they must discuss the appropriateness of matters.¹⁹ Therefore the talented and skillful cannot conceal each other. When officers follow orders they should receive the highest rewards, when they disobey orders the most severe form of execution.²⁰ Then the courageous and strong will not contend with each other.

Only after effective instructions have been provided to the people can [the state] carefully select and employ them. Only after government affairs have been thoroughly ordered can the hundred offices be sufficiently provided. When instructions are thoroughly examined the people will manifest goodness. When practice becomes habit the people will embody the customs. This is the pinnacle of transformation through education.

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In antiquity they did not pursue a fleeing enemy too far or follow a retreating army too closely. By not pursuing them too far, it was difficult to draw them into a trap; by not pursuing so closely as to catch up, it was hard to ambush them. They regarded the forms of propriety [*li*] as their basic strength and benevolence as [the foundation of] their victory. After they were victori-

ous their teachings could again be employed.²¹ For this reason the true gentleman values them.

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Shun made the official announcement of their mission within the state [capital] because he wanted the people to first embrace his orders. The rulers of the Hsia dynasty administered their oaths amidst the army for they wanted the people to first complete their thoughts. The Shang rulers swore their oaths outside the gate to the encampment for they wanted the people to first fix their intentions and await the conflict. [King Wu] of the Chou waited until the weapons were about to clash and then swore his oath in order to stimulate the people's will [to fight].

The rulers of the Hsia rectified their Virtue and never employed the sharp blades of their weapons, so their weapons were not mixed together.²² The Shang relied on righteousness, so they first used the sharpness of weapons. The Chou relied on force, so they fully utilized the sharpness of their weapons.²³

The Hsia bestowed rewards in court in order to make eminent the good. The Shang carried out executions in the marketplace to overawe the evil. The Chou granted rewards in court and carried out executions in the marketplace to encourage gentlemen and terrify the common man. Hence the kings of all three dynasties manifested Virtue in the same way.

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When the [five types of] weapons are not intermixed, it will not be advantageous. Long weapons are for protection;²⁴ short weapons are for defending. If the weapons are too long they will be difficult to wield against others; if they are too short they will not reach the enemy. If they are too light they will be adroitly brandished, but such facility will easily lead to chaos. If they are too heavy they will be too clumsy, and if too clumsy they will not attain their objectives.

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As for their war chariots, those of the rulers of the Hsia were called "hook chariots" for they put uprightness first. Those of the Shang were called "chariots of the new moon" for they put speed first. Those of the Chou were called "the source of weapons" for they put excellence first.²⁵

For flags, the Hsia had a black one at the head representing control of men. The Shang's was white for the righteousness of Heaven. The Chou used yellow for the Tao of Earth.

For insignia²⁶ the Hsia used the sun and moon, valuing brightness. The Shang used the tiger, esteeming awesomeness. The Chou used the dragon, esteeming culture.

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When the army concentrates excessively on its awesomeness the people will cower, but if it diminishes its awesomeness the people will not be victorious. When superiors cause the people to be unable to be righteous, the hundred surnames to be unable to achieve proper organization, the artisans to be unable to profit [from their work], oxen and horses to be unable to fulfill their functions while the officers insult [the people]—this is termed “excessive awesomeness,” and the people will cower. When superiors do not respect Virtue but employ the deceptive and evil; when they do not honor the Tao but employ the courageous and strong; when they do not value those who obey commands but instead esteem those who contravene them; when they do not value good actions but esteem violent behavior so that [the people] insult the minor officials—this is termed “diminished awesomeness.” If the conditions of diminished awesomeness prevail the people will not be victorious.

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A campaign army²⁷ takes measure as its prime concern so that the people’s strength will be adequate. Then, even when the blades clash, the infantry will not run and the chariots will not gallop. When pursuing a fleeing enemy the troops will not break formation, thereby avoiding chaos. The solidarity of a campaign army derives from military discipline that maintains order in formation, does not exhaust the strength of men or horses, and—whether moving slowly or rapidly—does not exceed the measure of the commands.

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In antiquity the form and spirit governing civilian affairs would not be found in the military realm; those appropriate to the military realm would not be found in the civilian sphere.²⁸ If the form and spirit [appropriate to the] military realm enter the civilian sphere, the Virtue of the people will decline. When the form and spirit [appropriate to the] civilian sphere enter the military realm, then the Virtue of the people will weaken.

In the civilian sphere words are cultivated and speech languid. In court one is respectful and courteous and cultivates himself to serve others. Unsummoned, he does not step forth; unquestioned, he does not speak. It is difficult to advance but easy to withdraw.

In the military realm one speaks directly and stands firm. When deployed in formation one focuses on duty and acts decisively. Those wearing battle armor do not bow; those in war chariots need not observe the forms of propriety [*li*]; those manning fortifications do not scurry. In times of danger one does not pay attention to seniority. Thus the civilian forms of behavior [*li*] and military standards [*fa*] are like inside and outside; the civil and the martial are like left and right.

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In antiquity the Worthy Kings made manifest the Virtue of the people and fully [sought out]²⁹ the goodness of the people. Thus they did not neglect the virtuous nor demean the people in any respect. Rewards were not granted, and punishments were never even tried.

Shun neither granted rewards nor imposed punishments, but the people could still be employed. This was the height of Virtue.

The Hsia granted rewards but did not impose punishments. This was the height of instruction.

The Shang imposed punishments but did not grant rewards. This was the height of awesomeness.

The Chou used both rewards and punishments, and Virtue declined.

Rewards should not be [delayed] beyond the appropriate time for you want the people to quickly profit from doing good. When you punish someone do not change his position for you want the people to quickly see the harm of doing what is not good.

Do not reward great victories, for then neither the upper nor lower ranks will boast of their achievements. If the upper ranks cannot boast they will not seem arrogant, while if the lower ranks cannot boast no distinctions will be established among the men. When neither of them boasts this is the pinnacle of deference.

In cases of great defeat do not punish anyone, for then both the upper and lower ranks will assume the disgrace falls on them. If the upper ranks reproach themselves they will certainly regret their errors, while if the lower ranks feel the same they will certainly try to avoid repeating the offense. When all the ranks divide [the responsibility for] the detestable among themselves, this is the pinnacle of yielding.

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In antiquity those on border duty were not required to serve [labor duty] for three years thereafter, and the ruler would personally observe the people's labor.³⁰ Upper and lower ranks recompensed each other in this fashion, which was the pinnacle of harmony.

When they had attained their aim [of pacifying the realm], they sang triumphal songs³¹ to show their happiness. They stored away the implements of war, erected the Spirit Terrace,³² and responded to the labors of the people to show that the time for rest had come.

3. Determining Rank

In general, to wage war: [First] determine rank and position; prominently record accomplishments and offenses; retain mendicant knights;³³ publicize instructions and edicts; make inquiries among the populace; seek out artisans; apply methodology to planning; fully exploit things; change [the people's] hatreds;³⁴ dispel doubts; nourish strength; search out and employ the skillful; and take action in accord with the people's hearts.

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In general, to wage war: Solidify the people; analyze the advantages [of terrain]; impose order on the turbulent; [regulate] advancing and stopping; accept upright [remonstrance]; nourish a sense of shame; constrain the laws; and investigate punishments. Minor offenders should then be executed. If minor offenders are executed, how can major [offenses] arise?

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Accord with Heaven; make material resources abundant; bring joy to the people; take advantage of the resources of Earth; and value military weapons. These are termed the "Five Plans." To accord with Heaven follow the seasons; to increase material resources rely on [seizing them from] the enemy. To bring joy to the people encourage and bring them into concord [with their superiors]. To take advantage of terrain defend strategic points. Valuing weapons, there are bows and arrows for withstanding attack, maces and spears for defense, and halberds and spear-tipped halberds for support.

Now each of these five weapons has its appropriate use: The long protect the short, the short rescue the long. When they are used in turn, the battle can be sustained. When they are employed all at once, [the army] will be strong. When you see [the enemy's] situation, you can be a match for it. This is termed "weighting."

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A defending army should stand fast, encourage the people, and bring them into accord [with their superiors]. Only after seeing the invading enemy should it move. The general's mind is focused; the minds of the people are at one with his.

Horses, oxen, chariots, weapons, relaxation, and an adequate diet are the army's strength. Instructions are simply a matter of preparation; warfare is only a question of constraints. The army's commanding general is the body, the companies are the limbs, and the squads of five are the thumb and fingers.

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In general, warfare is a question of the strategic balance of power [*ch'üan*], and combat is a matter of courage. The deployment of formations is a matter of skill. Employ what [your men] want, and effect what they are capable of; abolish what they do not want and are incapable of. Do the opposite of this to the enemy.

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In general, warfare is a question of having Heaven, material resources, and excellence.

When the day and time for battle have been appropriately fixed and it is not necessary to change them; when augury by the tortoise shell presages victory; and when events proceed in a subtle, mysterious fashion, this is termed "having Heaven."

When the masses have [material resources], [the state] has them. When they thereby produce what is profitable, this is termed "having resources."

When the men are practiced in the [relative] advantages of the formations, and they fully exhaust [the strength of] things in preparation [for battle], this is referred to as "attaining excellence."

When the people are encouraged to fulfill their responsibilities, they are termed "men who take pleasure [in warfare]."

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Increasing the army and making the [formations] solid; multiplying its strength and constantly training [the troops]; relying on [exploiting the strength] of things; perceiving the [nature of] things; and responding to sudden [events] are what is meant by "effecting preparations."

Fast chariots and fleet infantrymen, bows and arrows, and a strong defense are what is meant by "increasing the army." Secrecy, silence, and great internal strength are what is meant by "making formations solid." On this basis, being able to advance and being able to withdraw are what is meant by "multiplying strength." At times of little activity the upper ranks instruct [and constantly drill the lower ranks]. This is what is meant by "training [the troops] in formations." When there are appropriate offices [for both com-

mand and administration], it is termed “relying on [exploiting the strength of] things.” When in accord with this things are perceived [and managed], it is referred to as “simplifying administration.”

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Determine the [number of] your masses in accord with the terrain, and deploy your formations in accord with the enemy. When in attacking, waging battle, defending, advancing, retreating, and stopping, the front and rear are ordered and the chariots and infantry move in concord, this is termed a well-planned campaign. If they do not follow orders; do not trust [their officers]; are not harmonious; are lax, doubtful, weary, afraid; avoid responsibility; cower; are troubled, unrestrained, deflated, or dilatory, it is termed a “disastrous campaign.” When they suffer from extreme arrogance, abject terror, moaning and grumbling, constant fear, or [frequent] regrets over actions being taken, they are termed “destroyed and broken.” Being able to be large or small or firm or weak, to change formations, and to use large numbers or small groups—in all respects being a match [for the enemy]—is referred to as “[exploiting] the balance of power [*ch’üan*] in warfare.”

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In general, to wage war: Employ spies against the distant; observe the near; act in accord with the seasons; take advantage of [the enemy’s] material resources; esteem good faith; abhor the doubtful. Arouse the soldiers with fervor of righteousness. Undertake affairs at the appropriate time. Employ people with kindness. When you see the enemy, remain quiet; when you see turbulence, do not be hasty to respond. When you see danger and hardship, do not forget the masses. Within the state be generous and foster good faith. Within the army be magnanimous and martial. When the blades clash, be decisive and adroit. Within the state there should be harmony; within the army there should be standards. When the blades clash, investigate [the battlefield situation]. Within the state display cooperation; within the army display uprightness; in battle display good faith.

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As for military formations: When advancing, the most important thing for the ranks is to be dispersed; when engaged in battle [it is] to be dense and for the weapons to be of mixed types. Instructions to the people should be thorough; quietness is the basis of order; awesomeness becomes advantageous when it is made manifest. When people preserve each other according to righteousness, then they will be stimulated to action. When many well-con-

ceived plans prove successful, the people submit to them. If they sincerely submit at the appropriate time, then subsequent affairs will be well ordered. When things are manifest, then the eye discerns them clearly. When plans have been decided, the mind is strong. When advancing and withdrawing are without doubt, one can give the appearance of being without plans.³⁵ When listening to [legal affairs] and punishing [the guilty], do not wantonly change their designations or change their flags.

Whenever affairs are well executed they will endure; when they accord with ancient ways they can be effected. When the oath is clear and stimulating the men will be strong, and you will extinguish [the effects] of baleful omens and auspicious signs.

The Tao for eliminating baleful omens [and auspicious signs] is as follows. One is called righteousness. Charge [the people] with good faith, approach them with strength,³⁶ establish the foundation [of kingly government], and unify the strategic power of All under Heaven. There will not be any men who are not pleased, so this is termed “doubly employing the people.”

Another is called [advantages conferred by] the strategic balance of power [ch'üan]. Increase [the enemy's] excesses, seize what he loves. Then acting from without, we can cause a response from within.³⁷

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The first is termed men; the second, uprightness; the third, language; the fourth, skill; the fifth, fire; the sixth, water; the seventh, weapons. They are referred to as the Seven Administrative Affairs.

Glory, profit, shame, and death are referred to as the Four Preservations.

Being tolerant and congenial while yet accumulating awesomeness [is the way] to prevent transgressions and change intentions. In all cases this is the Tao.

Only benevolence can attract people; however, if one is benevolent but not trustworthy, then on the contrary he will vanquish himself. Treat men as men, be upright with the upright, employ appropriate language, and use fire only where it should be used.

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As for the Tao of Warfare: After you have aroused [the people's] *ch'i* [spirit] and moreover enacted governmental measures [such as rewards and punishments], encompass them with a benign countenance, and lead them with your speeches. Upbraid them in accord with their fears; assign affairs in accord with their desires. When you have crossed the enemy's borders and taken control of his territory, appoint people to the tasks of government. These are termed “methods of war.”

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All human qualities must be sought among the masses. Test and evaluate them in terms of name and action [to see if they cohere], for they must excel at implementation. If they are to perform some action but do not, then you yourself should lead them. If they are to perform some action and do so, then ensure that they do not forget it.³⁸ If you test them three times successfully, then make [their talents] evident.³⁹ What is appropriate to human life is termed the law.

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In general the Tao for imposing order on chaos consists of first, benevolence; second, credibility; third, straightforwardness; fourth, unity; fifth, righteousness; sixth, change [wrought by authority]; seventh, centralized authority.

The Tao for establishing the laws consists of first, acceptance [of constraints]; second, the laws; third, the establishment [of the talented and upright]; fourth, urgency [in administration]; fifth, distinguishing them with insignia; sixth, ordering the colors; seventh, no nonstandard uniforms among the officers.

As for the army, when the [power of the] law lies solely with oneself, it is termed “centralized.” When those below the ruler all fear the law, it is termed “law.” When the army does not listen to minor affairs; when in battle it does not concern itself with small advantages; and when on the day of conflict it successfully completes its plans in subtle fashion, it is termed “the Tao.”

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As for warfare: When upright methods do not prove effective, then centralized control of affairs [must be undertaken]. [If the people] do not submit [to Virtue], then laws must be imposed. If they do not trust each other, they must be unified. If they are dilatory, move them; if they are doubtful, change [their doubts]. If the people do not trust the ruler, then whatever is promulgated must not be revised. This has been the administrative rule from antiquity.

4. Strict Positions⁴⁰

In general, as for the Tao of Warfare: Positions should be strictly defined; administrative measures should be severe; strength should be nimble; the [soldier's] *ch'i* should be constrained; and the minds [of the officers and people] should be unified.

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In general, as for the Tao of Warfare: Rank and appoint men to office who understand the Tao and display righteousness. Establish companies and squads.⁴¹ Order the rows and files. Set the correct [spacing between] the horizontal and vertical.⁴² Investigate whether names and realities [correspond].

Those soldiers who stand [in their formations] should advance and then crouch down; those who [fire from a] squatting position should advance and then kneel.⁴³ If they are frightened make the formations dense; if they are in danger have them assume a sitting position. If [the enemy] is seen at a distance they will not fear them; if, when they are close, they do not look at them they will not scatter.⁴⁴

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When the commanding general dismounts from his chariot, the generals of the left and right also dismount, those wearing armor all sit, and the oath is sworn, after which the army is slowly advanced.⁴⁵ All officers, from the generals down to the infantry squad leaders, wear armor.⁴⁶ Calculate the deployment of the light and heavy forces. Rouse the horses to action; have the infantrymen and armored soldiers set up a clamor. If they are afraid also collapse them into a tighter unit. Those who are kneeling should squat down; those who are squatting should lie down. Have them crawl forward on their knees, then put them at ease.⁴⁷ Have them get up, shout, and advance to the drums. Then signal a halt with the bells. With gagged mouths and minimal dry rations, swear the oath. Have the troops withdraw, crawling back on their knees.⁴⁸ Seize and summarily execute any deserters to stop the others from looking about [to desert]. Shout in order to lead them.⁴⁹ If they are too terrified of the enemy, do not threaten them with execution and severe punishments but display a magnanimous countenance. Speak to them about what they have to live for;⁵⁰ supervise them in their duties.

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Within the Three Armies disciplinary action is not imposed on anyone for more than half a day. Confinement does not go beyond a rest period, nor is their food reduced by more than half. If you correct their doubts and delusions they can be led, can be made to submit to orders.

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In general, in battle one endures through strength, and gains victory through spirit. One can endure with a solid defense, but will achieve victory through being endangered. When the heart's foundation is solid, a new surge

of *ch'i* will bring victory. With armor one is secure; with weapons one attains victory.

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In general, the chariots realize security through close formations; the infantry becomes solid through squatting; armor becomes solid through weight;⁵¹ victory is attained through the lightness of the weapons.

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When men have minds set on victory, all they see is the enemy. When men have minds filled with fear, all they see is their fear. When these two minds intersect and determine [action], [it is essential that] the advantages [as perceived by each] are as one.⁵² It is the [commander's] duty to create this unification. Only from [the perspective of] authority [*ch'üan*] can it be seen.

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In general, in warfare: If you advance somewhat into the enemy's territory with a light force it is dangerous.⁵³ If you advance with a heavy force deep into the enemy's territory you will accomplish nothing. If you advance with a light force deep into enemy territory you will be defeated. If you advance with a heavy force somewhat into the enemy's territory you can fight successfully. Thus in warfare the light and heavy are mutually related.

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When halting be careful about the weapons and armor.⁵⁴ When on the march be cautious about the rows and files. When in battle be careful about advancing and stopping.

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In general, in warfare: If you are respectful [the troops] will be satisfied. If you lead in person they will follow. When orders are annoying they will be ignored. When commands are issued in proper measure they will be seriously regarded. When the drumbeat is rapid they will move quickly; when the drumbeat is more measured they will move accordingly. When their uniforms are light they will feel quick; if lustrous they will feel stalwart.

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In general, when the horses and chariots are sturdy, the armor and weapons advantageous, then even a light force can penetrate deeply.⁵⁵ If you esteem equality [in rank], then no one will strive for great results. If you value taking charge, then many will die [for the cause]. If you value life, then there

will be many doubts; if you honor death [itself], then they will not be victorious.

In general, men will die for love, out of anger, out of [fear of] awesomeness, for righteousness, and for profit.

In general, it is the Tao of Warfare that when they are well instructed men will regard death lightly. When they are constrained by the Tao they will die for the upright.

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In general, in warfare act in accord with whether [the troops have the spirit] to be victorious or not. Accord with Heaven, accord with men.⁵⁶

In general, in warfare: The Three Armies should not be on the alert for more than three days; a single company should not be vigilant more than half a day; while the guard duty⁵⁷ for a single soldier should not exceed one rest period.

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Those that greatly excel in warfare use the foundation; next in greatness are those that employ the ends.⁵⁸ Warfare is taking control of strategy, preserving the subtle. The foundation and the ends are only a question of [exploiting] the strategic balance of power [*ch’üan*].

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In general, regarding victory: When the Three Armies are united as one man they will conquer.

In general, as for the drums: There are drums [directing the deployment of] the flags and pennants; drums for [advancing] the chariots; drums for the horses;⁵⁹ drums for [directing] the infantry; drums for the different types of troops; drums for the head;⁶⁰ and drums for the feet.⁶¹ All seven should be properly prepared and ordered.

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In general, in warfare: When the formation is already solid, do not make it heavier. When your main forces are advancing, do not commit all of them for by doing so you will be endangered.

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In general, in warfare: It is not forming a battle array that is difficult; it is reaching the point that the men can be ordered into formation that is hard. It is not attaining the ability to order them into formation that is difficult; it is

reaching the point of being able to employ them that is hard. If is not knowing what to do that is difficult; it is putting it into effect that is hard. Men from each [of the four quarters] have their own nature. Character differs from region to region. Through teaching they come to have regional habits, the customs of each state [thus] being different. [Only] through the Tao are their customs transformed.

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In general, whether [the troops] are numerous or few, even though they have already attained victory, they should act as if they had not been victorious.⁶² The troops should not boast about the sharpness of their weapons or speak of the stoutness of their armor or the sturdiness of their chariots or the quality of their horses; nor should the masses take themselves to be many—for they have not yet gained the Tao.⁶³

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In general, if in warfare you are victorious, share the achievement and praise with the troops. If you are about to reengage in battle, then make their rewards exceptionally generous and the punishments heavier. If you failed to direct them to victory, accept the blame yourself. If you must fight again, swear an oath and assume a forward position. Do not repeat your previous tactics. Whether you win or not, do not deviate from this method, for it is termed the “True Principle.”

In general, with regard to the people: Rescue them with benevolence; engage in battle with righteousness; make decisions through wisdom; fight with courage; exercise sole authority through credibility; encourage them with profits; and gain victory through achievements. Thus the mind must embody benevolence and actions should incorporate righteousness. Relying on [the nature of] things is wisdom; relying on the great is courage; relying on long-standing [relations leads to] good faith. Yielding results in harmony, and the men of themselves will be deferential. If men attribute failings to themselves, they will compete to be worthy.⁶⁴ When men are pleased in their hearts, they will exhaust their strength.

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In general, in warfare: Attack the weak and quiet, avoid the strong and quiet. Attack the tired, avoid the well trained and alert. Attack the truly afraid, avoid those that [display] only minor fears. From antiquity these have been the rules for governing [the army].

5. Employing Masses

In general, as for the Tao of Warfare: When you employ a small number they must be solid.⁶⁵ When you employ a large mass they must be well ordered. With a small force it is advantageous to harass the enemy; with a large mass it is advantageous to use orthodox [tactics].⁶⁶ When employing a large mass advance and stop; when employing a small number advance and withdraw. If your large mass encounters a small enemy force, surround them at a distance but leave one side open.⁶⁷ [Conversely,] if you divide [your forces] and attack in turn, a small force can withstand a large mass. If their masses are beset by uncertainty, you should take advantage of it. If you are contending for a strategic position, abandon your flags [as if in flight, and when the enemy attacks] turn around to mount a counterattack. If the enemy is vast, then concentrate your troops and let them surround you. If the enemy is fewer and fearful, avoid them and leave a path open.⁶⁸

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In general, as for warfare: Keep the wind to your back, the mountains behind you, heights on the right, and defiles on the left. Pass through wetlands, cross over damaged roads. Complete double the normal march before encamping; select ground [for encamping] configured like a turtle's back.

In general, as for warfare: After deploying observe their actions. Watch the enemy and then initiate movement. If they are waiting [for our attack], then act accordingly. Do not drum the advance, but await the moment when their masses arise. If they attack, entrench your forces and observe them.

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In general, as for warfare: [Employ] large and small numbers to observe their tactical variations; advance and retreat to probe the solidity of their defenses. Endanger them to observe their fears. Be tranquil to observe if they become lax. Move to observe if they have doubts. Mount a surprise attack and observe their discipline.

Mount a sudden strike on their doubts. Attack their haste.⁶⁹ Force them to constrict their deployment. Launch a sudden strike against their order. Take advantage of [their failure] to avoid harm.⁷⁰ Obstruct their strategy. Seize their thoughts. Capitalize on their fears.

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In general, when pursuing a fleeing enemy do not rest. If some of the enemy stop on the road, then be wary!⁷¹

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In general, when nearing an enemy's capital, you must have a road by which to advance; when about to withdraw, you must ponder the return route.

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In general, as for warfare: If you move first [it will be easy] to become exhausted. If you move after [the enemy, the men] may become afraid. If you rest, [the men may] become lax; if you do not rest, they may also become exhausted. Yet if you rest very long, on the contrary, they may also become afraid.

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Writing letters of final farewell is referred to as "breaking off all thoughts of life." Selecting the elite and ranking the weapons is termed "increasing the strength of the men." Casting aside the implements of office and carrying only minimal rations is termed "opening the men's thoughts." From antiquity this has been the rule.